

DECLARATION
OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP COUNTRIES AND SLOVENIA

Warsaw, 21 July 2004

Four years ago the European Council adopted the Lisbon Strategy. It is the most important social and economic programme of the European Union, mapping out its development in areas of crucial significance in the global market of goods and ideas.

Its goal, fully supported by all Member States, is the creation by the year 2010, on the territory of Europe, of the world's most competitive and dynamic economy – based on knowledge, capable of sustained development, generating more and better jobs, and characterised by higher social cohesion.

Research and development is one of the areas of the Lisbon Strategy that will have decisive impact on rapid improvement of the European Union's competitiveness.

The enlargement of the European Union has created the possibility of making the Lisbon Strategy more dynamic. Its full implementation will, allow the whole Union to take advantage of the significant human and economic potential of the new Member States, and to narrow the development and technological gap between the new and old member states. That will lead in the long run to sustained development of the European Union, its enhanced competitive capacity and stronger world position. The instruments of FP7 should serve that goal and accelerate the process of integration.

In the opinion of the Visegrad Group countries and Slovenia, the enlargement can enhance the fostering and structuring of the European Research Area to a greater extent than it would appear from a simple pooling of the new Member States' R&D resources.

We call on the European Union to incorporate into the Framework Programmes priorities and criteria geared to better use of the R&D and innovation potential of the new Member States.

In the course of implementation of the 6th Framework Programme, as well as preparation for the 7th Framework Programme, the EU should take fully into account recommendations of the High Level Expert Panel on the effects of the new instruments in the 6th Framework Programme. This should go together with the simplification of the rules of participation in the Framework Programmes – as postulated by many Members States. Moreover, to ensure equal opportunities to any eligible institution the system of anonymous evaluation of proposals should be reintroduced to create conditions for more objective evaluation of the proposals' content. Also the process of approval of projects should take into consideration the value represented by different sizes of projects and different forms of collaboration.

Similarly, instruments, like STREPs or CRAFTs, that facilitate the involvement of smaller players in Framework Programmes, should be given an adequate proportion in all priorities already during the implementation of the 6th Framework Programme as well as in the new 7th Framework Programme.

We support the proposal of including basic research into EU research policy and devoting for it European funding that would be additional to national financial resources.

We agree with the approach to take full advantage of complementarities of FPs with the structural funds and all other funding sources. The respective systemic approach should be consequently implemented into guidelines for European research policy.

It is in the interest of European Union to raise competitive capacity of its economy – leading to faster growth and improved living standards. That can be achieved through promotion of research, development and innovation in all Member States – resulting in advanced products and services that could meet the needs of the societies and economies of the European Union.

It is the Union's priority to strive for the best integration of the new Member States, their inclusion in all EU policies and their instruments. We recommend that approach, since it is a prerequisite of effectively tapping the potential of the new Member States in building a competitive and cohesive Europe enjoying sustained development.

Finally, we would like to emphasise that it is our priority to contribute to reaching the 3% Barcelona objective by 2010.

Signed in alphabetical order by:

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